

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN COMMUNICATION PLAN TEMPLATE

Note: Terms are listed in order of appearance in Communication Plan Template

Program

What public health effort is the focus of this communication plan? For the purposes of this template, a program can be a specific issue (Example: Underage Drinking Prevention), a local coalition (Example: Apples and Oranges Nutrition and Fitness Coalition), or community-based effort to improve health (Example: Strive County Community Health Action Team).

Overall Program Communication Budget

Describes the total amount of funds that the program has to support the communication plan for the issue. An opportunity to list the specific costs of each element of the communication plan is found in the “Budget Requirements” section of the plan. This section is essentially a tally of the individual parts of the communication budget.

Priority Areas

Each of the three public health issues (Nutrition and Fitness, Substance Abuse Prevention, and Tobacco Prevention) has identified specific priority areas for its focus. Nutrition and Fitness has selected the following five goals as priorities: improve access to and consumption of healthy, safe, and affordable food and beverages; reduce access to and consumption of high calorie and low nutrient foods and beverages; raise awareness about the importance of healthy eating and physical activity to prevent obesity; encourage physical activity; and decrease sedentary behavior.

Substance Abuse Prevention has determined the following seven areas as its priorities: 1) Underage drinking, 2) Adult binge drinking, 3) Non-medical use of prescription drugs, 4) Alcohol use among pregnant women, 5) Inhalant use, 6) Marijuana use, and 7) Methamphetamine use.

The four comprehensive goals that the tobacco control efforts in Oklahoma focus on are as follows: eliminate secondhand smoke exposure; prevent youth initiation; promote tobacco cessation services; and reduce tobacco industry influences.

Overall Evaluation Approach

This section asks you to describe in general terms how you plan to evaluate the communication effort. Here is an example: “Extensive surveys will be used across the demographic areas to compare current consumption of fruits and vegetables to that of one and three years after our campaign.”

Goal of the Communication

This section of the plan asks what do you want to accomplish through the execution of this communication plan? A goal is something that we strive for – it is defined as being a broad long-term aim that defines the accomplishment of the mission. So our goal is something that we want – are aiming for – and by achieving it, we will know that we are accomplishing our mission. An example of a communication goal is as follows: “Inform the public of free services provided by the Regional Prevention Coordinator and its benefits to the community.”

Formative Research

Research conducted during the development of your program to help you decide on and describe your intended audience, understand the factors which influence their behavior, and determine the best ways to reach them. Formative research looks at behaviors, attitudes and practices of the intended audiences. It also involves exploring what determines specific behaviors and uses a variety of data collection methods. Here is an example of one response to this question on the communication plan: “Our formative research has been gathered through the use of surveys conducted by SWAT members at high schools and adult coalition members in the community. Hundreds have answered brief surveys pertaining to tobacco use and media messaging.”

Review of Literature/Research/Resources

There is a growing body of scientific research and evaluations of different health communication methods that provide evidence that an approach works or not. It is important to review this information in order to determine if your approach is a proven one. We refer to this method as selecting “Best Practices.” A best practice is a technique or methodology that, through experience and research, has proven to reliably lead to a desired result. This term refers to implementing interventions which have been proven to be effective. Best practices have been established for all three program areas. Your state-level program contact can assist you in finding out what has been shown to work in your particular program.

Intended Audience

The specific group(s) of people whom the communication is explicitly designed to reach or impact. The primary intended audience consists of those individuals the program is designed to affect. The secondary intended audience is the group (or groups) that can help reach or influence the primary audience. (Intended audience is often referred to as “target audience.”) To answer the question of “Who is your intended audience?,” you really must answer two questions: 1) who are you trying to reach with your message, and 2) why have you chosen this audience? Here is an example of how these questions were answered in a communication plan: “Intended Audience: Teens 13-18 in our county. Why? This is the age group most likely to start smoking and dipping. This audience was also chosen because the state’s tobacco use rate for this age group is higher than the national average.”

Message

The information that needs to be communicated to the audience. Key questions to answer are: What do you want to say? Why have you chosen this message? How do you want to say the message? Example: “‘Friends Who Host Stand to Lose the Most – Don’t give people under 21 a place to drink.’ Media materials already created as part of larger campaign – stay on message by using same materials. We are letting people know they will be fined at a minimum for providing a location for underage drinking to occur.”

Method/Channels

Key questions to answer for this part of the plan include: Where do you want to reach the audience? What are the best ways to reach it? (I.e. radio, TV, social media, earned media, etc.)

What does your intended audience read, listen to, watch, or engage in? You have to reach them by placing your message where they’ll see it. Here’s a list of possible channels, adapted from Chapter 45, Section 5: *Promoting Awareness and Interest Through Communication* in the Community Toolbox (<http://ctb.ku.edu>)

- *Posters*

- *Fliers and brochures* - These can be more compelling in places where the issue is already in people's minds (doctors' offices for health issues, supermarkets for nutrition, etc.). (Please see **Chapter 6: Section 11: Creating Posters and Fliers**, and **Section 13: Creating Brochures**.)
- *Newsletters*
- *Promotional materials* - Items such as caps, T-shirts, and mugs can serve as effective channels for your message.
- *Comic books or other reading material* - Reading matter that is intrinsically interesting to the target audience can be used to deliver a message through a story that readers are eager to follow, or simply through the compelling nature of the medium and its design.
- *Internet sites* - In addition to your organization's website, interactive social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are effective media for communication
- *Letters to the Editor*
- *News stories (earned media)*
- *Editorials, columns and opinion pieces (including op-eds)*
- *Reports from the program*
- *Press releases and press conferences*
- *Presentations or presence at local events and local and national conferences, fairs, and other gatherings*
- *Community outreach*
- *Community or national events* - The Great American Smokeout, National Literacy Day, a community "Take Back the Night" evening against violence, and other community events can serve to convey a message and highlight an issue.
- *Public demonstrations*
- *Word of mouth*
- *Movies* - Since the beginnings of the film industry, movies have carried messages about race, the status of women, adult literacy, homosexuality, mental illness, AIDS, and numerous other social issues.

- *TV* - TV can both carry straightforward messages – ads and Public Service Announcements (PSAs) – and present news and entertainment programs that deal with your issue or profile your organization.
- *Theater and interactive theater* - A play or skit, especially one written by people who have experienced what it illustrates, can be a powerful way to present an issue, or to underline the need for services or change.
- *Music*
- *Exhibits and public art* - The AIDS quilt, a huge quilt with squares made by thousands of people, commemorating victims of the HIV epidemic, is a prime example.

Duration and Frequency of Communication or Message

Determine how long the communication effort needs to last – a week, a month, a year? The length of time that a communication is active depends on many things such as the level of awareness of the problem, if there is any resistance to a preferred solution, available resources, etc. In addition to determining the length of time the message is active, one needs to consider how frequently the message should be heard (daily, weekly, etc.)? Here is an example of how one group responded to this question: “Conduct the campaign (newspaper and online ads; radio commercials) throughout the school year with emphasis at the start of the school year (powering up for a new school year, energy for activities) and holidays (healthy eating still feasible and tasty).”

What is Needed to Accomplish This?

This step of the plan requires the user to consider all of the logistics necessary for implementing the desired message. How will the message actually get out to the intended audience? Do you need radio spots developed, artwork, sample letters to the editor, Facebook accounts created, etc.? If you are using materials created by another agency or program, do you need to go through a permission process to use them or do they need to be customized? Make sure that all of these considerations are given as the plan and timeline are developed.

Budget Requirements

The budget is a very important piece of the overall plan. If you have not considered the resources needed to deliver the desired message, your communication plan will never get off the ground. Make sure you have carefully considered how much each element of this plan costs. Have you been provided with a maximum amount that can be spent on a particular activity? Are there other budgetary constraints that need to be dealt with? If your costs exceed your budget, are there opportunities for in-kind contributions? Each of the budget elements that you determine are tallied and are listed on the top of the plan in the area titled “Overall Program Communication Budget.”

Evaluation

In this section of the plan, describe how you will determine how well your efforts worked. This is important to know so that you can help improve the program. Were your efforts effective? Describe who is responsible for evaluating the message. This section feeds into the “Overall Evaluation Plan/Approach” noted at the beginning of the plan.

Who Is Responsible?

This is an essential element of any plan -- who will take action and be held responsible for your plan (or portions of it) being carried out. It is critical to be very specific in this portion of the plan – name names. Simply listing “coalition members” or “Board members” for example, is not useful – who is the exact person (or possibly persons) who are accountable to the group for making sure that something gets done. It is important this be a mixture of staff and volunteer responsibilities. If everything is the responsibility of staff only, you don’t really have a functioning coalition.

Timeline

This is another section where specificity is of the utmost importance. When does a task need to be completed? What are the specific dates for the steps that need to be taken?